

parisons, went on to illustrate by diagrams the great want of correspondence which existed between the shape of the head and the shape of the brain, and finished up his paper with an attack on the so-called science of Phrenology, and the modes of procedure adopted by its professors.

An interesting debate followed, in which Mr. Kingsford, Dr. Selve Bennett, Mr. Boyes, Drs. Hack Tuke, Huggard, Savage, Hughes Bennett, &c., took part.

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#### SHOULD THE COST OF MAINTENANCE OF PAUPER ASYLUMS BE BORNE BY THE STATE OR BY LOCAL TAXATION?

We observe that the following resolution, proposed by Mr. Pell and seconded by Mr. Ellis, was adopted at a meeting of the Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely Chamber of Agriculture, Nov. 12, 1881:—

“That the charges paid out of the local rates for the support of pauper lunatic asylums be defrayed from Imperial funds.”

It is proposed to hold a County Meeting on this and kindred questions.

We believe that the County Magistrates of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely have both passed formal resolutions at their respective sessions, declaring it desirable that the Government should take up the asylums as they have already done the cost of the police. In South Leicestershire they have pursued the same course.

The correspondent of the “Derbyshire Times” of Nov. 5, observes, when speaking of this action, “There can be no doubt that this is a very important resolution, and one which will probably extend to and be discussed in other counties, especially as the Government last Session promised to take up and deal with the subject of Lunacy and Lunatic Asylums. Considering present circumstances, and the prospects of County Boards, which mean chiefly *Guardians*, having the management of Pauper Asylums, there is every disposition to believe that the balance of advantage would be decidedly in favour of the Cambridge resolution, although State control might not be an unmixed blessing. It will, however, be an evil day for the Insane Poor when their interests are handed over to ‘Guardians,’ who would probably form the largest proportion of Pauper Lunatic Asylum Committees. Far better to exclude Asylums altogether from the operation of any County Boards Bill rather than take a retrograde step by placing Pauper Asylums under the control of County Boards and Guardians. Let these Institutions be under State Control, under the Home Secretary, like the Prisons, or under the Local Government Board, which has the charge of Paupers. The advantages of State Control are obvious. There would be greater concentration, *e.g.*, one Asylum instead of two, as proposed in Derbyshire, less loss and distribution of energy and material, and more facility of administration, with, in all probability, less cost in management. The resources of Pauper Asylums would be made more largely available for recent, urgent, and violent cases; these institutions would be utilised to a greater extent; and the Idiots and Imbeciles, instead of being scattered over various Workhouses (as in Derbyshire), might be concentrated in one Intermediate Asylum, or disused Workhouse, set apart for the purpose. This was pointed out by Mr. Pell, M.P., the other day [at the Poor Law Conference at Derby. The feeling of that meeting was in favour of concentration, Mr. Pell’s motion being passed unanimously.

“I am not to be understood as objecting to, or calling in question, the management of County Justices of Pauper Asylums. On the contrary, I believe that the poor insane will never be better or more humanely and liberally treated than under the present system. But as it is evident that, in response

to popular clamour, some change appears to be inevitable and fast approaching, I take it that State control would be the next best arrangement to the present system, and certainly far preferable to control by County Boards and Guardians, in the proportion contemplated. Another, and perhaps the chief advantage of State control would be *one* controlling authority instead of several (often conflicting authorities) as at present. It is most reasonable that Pauper Lunacy at least should be an Imperial question, a National charge. Pauper Lunatic Asylums under State control would mean the removal of existing anomalies and difficulties. This is the question of the immediate future."

The subject, while well worthy of discussion, is not to be hastily decided upon. The money paid out by the "Imperial Exchequer" must, after all, come out of the pockets of the ratepayers. It is also a grave question whether local taxation, combined with local management and control, are not the best checks on extravagance, and the best means of keeping up local interest. However, the question is one on which much may be said on both sides, and ought to be approached in a fair spirit, and altogether apart from the question of agricultural distress and its relief. Superintendents of asylums have nothing to do with this, as such.

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#### FATAL OCCURRENCE AT THE FULBOURN ASYLUM.

[We take from the "Cambridge Independent Press and University Herald," Nov. 26, 1881, all that is important in the evidence given at the Coroner's inquest. No blame whatever attaches to the officers of the Asylum. That such accidents are not of much more frequent occurrence is one of the extraordinary features of asylum life, and redounds to the credit of those in charge. It will be seen that the cause for so sudden a death from a single blow was the rupture of a blood-vessel, and consequent effusion of blood over the base of the brain and into the lateral ventricles, the blood flowing into the fourth ventricle and downwards, compressing the medulla oblongata.—Eds. J. M. S.]

On Sunday morning last an unfortunate occurrence took place at the Cambridgeshire Lunatic Asylum, by which an inmate, named George Taylor, met with a sudden death at the hands of another inmate, named Isaac Warwick. Below will be found the details of the transaction as stated by the authorities and attendants of the Institution, but one circumstance, which there is every reason to believe occurred, did not transpire, viz., the provocation on the part of the deceased which several of the inmates could have sworn to, but that it was not deemed advisable to administer the oath to lunatics. It is said that Taylor struck Warwick a violent blow on the jaw, either on the way from breakfast or in the ward, but this was not seen by any of the attendants.

An inquest was held at the Asylum Nov. 21.

George Mackenzie Bacon, M.D., deposed: I am the medical superintendent of this asylum. I produce the original order on which George Taylor was admitted to this asylum on the 15th of February in this year. He was 46 years old, and had not previously been here. He was described as neither suicidal or dangerous to others. Taylor has been since he has been here in a depressed condition of mind, and had delusions, thinking that the Devil was after him, and he would be burned alive. He exhibited no violence or dangerous tendencies here. I also produce the certificate of admission of Isaac Warwick, who is also at present in the asylum; he was admitted on the 12th of May, 1877, being then 21 years of age: he is described as being dangerous to others. I regarded Warwick as a congenital imbecile, of bad disposition, unable to control himself, and I have found him sly and deceitful, troublesome and mischievous; he also frequently had epileptic fits, and was irritable and excitable. He has more than once assaulted the attendants as well as other patients: for instance, he kicked one of the attendants on the nose, and disfigured him for several weeks, this year. But, as a rule, he was generally tolerably quiet, and was often employed usefully on the land and at simple work. It was not a case that I regarded as necessary for special precautions. Taylor was a slight man, but not a weak one. About half-past eight yesterday morning I was called to see the deceased by Mr. Boyd, the assistant medical officer; when I reached the ward I found the deceased lying on a bed in a single room: he was quite dead.